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And
Other Pieces




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**Largo
And
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Pieces**

Largo

And other Pieces

By
Arthur Perryman

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Contents

	PAGE
LARGO - - - - -	7
LINES IN AN INVALID'S ALBUM -	13
LINES WITH A COPY OF "IN TUNE WITH THE INFINITE" - - -	14
IN SOUTHBOURNE WOODS - -	15
THE LENGTHENING DAY - -	16
DAFFODILS - - - -	17
THE POET - - - -	18
ŒDIPUS - - - -	24
THE FIRST ROSE - - -	25
THE FIRST VIOLET - - -	26
ROBIN REDBREAST - - -	27
A BUTTONHOLE - - -	28
FAIRYLAND - - - -	29
THE FALLING LEAF - - -	31
THE PASSING OF SUMMER - -	32
TO A FRIEND - - - -	33
ANGEL ADORING - - -	34
MADONNA - - - -	35

Largo

BRETHREN, one further step. Stay, set me
down

Here in the shadow of the Cross of Christ;
And go ye, bid our brother Anselm pray
On the great organ; do ye also pray,
For I am drawing very nigh to death.
I am not fearful, for the Shadow falls
Full on the dark, dark places of my soul,
And in that Shadow are they hid from God.
So, in the Shadow, go I hence to Him
To be with Christ. But hush! Our Anselm stirs
The slumber of the chords; soft, soft and deep
As was my mother's voice, when at her feet
I learned to know the Mother of Our Lord.
Hark, brethren, how the great Andante swells
Upward in gathering majesty, proclaims,
In the Beginning, God—and now it sinks
And dies away, save for one echoing note,
Tender and clear as little children's voices
Singing the vesper hymn, Our God is Love.
So doth our Anselm compass us about
With these great utterances of music, thus
Teach us, in this one work, the truth that He
Who made the world doth love the world He
made;
That He who shaped the sun, and set the stars,
Is not best known in these mighty ways
Beyond our human reckoning, but speaks

Softly and gently as my mother spoke,
And blesses even as my mother blessed.
God seeks not to reveal Himself in power,
But fain would have us come to Him in love,
In faith, obedience, and childlike trust.
Power without love is utterly undone,
For love alone can win the hearts of men,
And we who love can never know the power,
Save as a manifesting of the love.
Brethren, ye know that I have ever been
A lover of this wondrous, perfect shadow
That men call earth; believing God abides
In all this mystery of His fashioning.
So the Lord Abbot, when my vows were young,
Gave me the care and tendance of his garden,
Against a sterner time; and there I wrought
Amid the lovely harmonies of flowers,
And an unstained, deep, and tranquil peace
That, like the dove, brooded and spread around
His wings of healing; and my growing soul,
Rising to purer heights of contemplation,
Saw God in every bright and beauteous form,
And heard Him speak in the glad song of birds,
And voiceless adoration of the flowers.
But He was with me, or I had not seen.
And so the day passed, and the night came.
Brethren, some men build holy lives on sand,
And skim the surface of the troubled deep,
And will not look at God through Christ's sad
eyes.
Such man was I: O brethren, pray for me,
And shun my sin. Ah! how the scene comes
back,
The clear evening sky, the hum of bees,

The last faint, drowsy notes of tired birds,
And shadows softly stealing over all ;
Rest, rest and peace. And so the Abbot came
And found me standing, quiet and alone.
He bade me follow him, and twice we walked
The gravelled path, nor spake he aught to me,
Until at last "Tell me, my son," he said,
"Grow we a thornless rose in this our garden?"
"Why, no, my Lord," I answered, whereupon
He fell to musing, and the shadows crept
About our feet. Again he slowly spake,
"You love this garden, and these flowers, son?"
"Aye, dearly, my good Lord." He said no more,
But looked upon me with his sad grave eyes.
So must the Christ have often looked, I think.
At last he spake again, "The flowers are well,
But, tell me, hast thou never thought, my son,
Of those more priceless flowers of our God,
That perish hour by hour, and day by day
Uncared for and unloved, that fade and fall
And rot amid the foulness of our cities?
Son, Christ and Holy Church hath need of them,
These blighted human souls in blighted bodies,
These loveless ones, for whom no flowers bloom,
For whom 'tis winter, winter, all the day,
The little day called life ; my heart most bleeds
For helpless children, seared with awful age,
With minds and bodies filled with gaping sores,
Babes crushed and broken 'neath the pain o' the
world.
My son, this is thine hour ; thou must go hence,
Bearing God's gracious flowers of love, compassion,
And carry hands of healing to their sores,
And bind their grievous wounds, and lead them
home."

Brethren, hear ye my shame ! I shrank away
And cried aloud, "To go from hence, and leave
The quiet cell, the garden, and the peace
That lifts me up to God—I cannot go."
But the Lord Abbot stopped my wandering words.
"Is this my son, who says he cannot go ?
I send you hence to find a deeper peace ;
Our God is here, but He is also there,
More there than here. But yesterday I rode
To lay my blessing on another son,
One whom I know and love ; he was without,
And none knew where, until I chanced to hear
The ranger's little daughter lay a-dying ;
And then I knew where I should find my friend,
And going swiftly down to that mean hut,
I found him, as I knew, beside the child.
They call my friend the highest name I know,
The father of his people ; you, O son,
Have somewhat yet to learn of God, I think."
And so he went, and left me standing there
Alone ; and twilight deepened o'er the land,
And twilight deepened, darkened, o'er my soul
And the night came. What need to tell the rest,
Of how, bowed down, and utterly abased
I came, and wrought among you ; ye were kind
And gracious, when ye gave me ministry
Of little children. O, what joy was mine,
When after weary months of patient toil,
I won their love, and they would let me lay
These hands upon their foreheads, and roll back
The stone from the tomb and bid the child come
forth.

And now I know, as I have never known,
How wide and tender is the heart of Christ,

And I have found Him more and more divine
As I have followed more His human way.
For whoso loses, finds himself again,
And not himself alone. Yea, man must love
A higher than himself, or else love dies ;
And God must bend to prove that He is God,
God, and no shadow of a nameless fear
Cast on the world. He craves our human love
As the sad hearts of men yearn for His love,
And both these needs, the human and divine,
Are met and satisfied in Christ Our Lord.
And knowing this is life, because is sure
Beneath all sorrow lies a deeper joy,
Behind a Cross a Resurrection Morn.
Brethren, last evening as I lay asleep
(The pain had left me for a little space,
And so I slept), I dreamed and thus I dreamed.
I stood again within the Abbey garden
And it was morning, fresh and fair and sweet.
Each gracious flower was crowned with dewy pearls,
Tears of the dusk, yea, tears of such as sit
In dark and sad avoidance of the dawn,
Guarding their path of failure, who yet know
That tears are holy in the sight of God.
A fancy, brethren? Aye, we live in dreams
Not yet our own. By dreams the world is made.
But, as I stood amid that beauty there,
My heart was hungry for another's heart
To share the joy and peace that now were mine.
And clear as mystic light at even came
The truth that flowers and birds and Nature's self
Lead home to God the soul alone who feels
Their beauty and their rapture are not his,
Save as a common heritage, who goes

With their glad message in his heart, and is
Eyes to the blind, Lo ! see what I have seen,
And to the joyless, share with me my joy,
And to the weary, there is peace at even.
So, musing thus, it seemèd, in my dream
My feet were passing swiftly from the garden
Along a certain path ; on either hand
Stretched fields of flowers, glorious and supreme,
Surpassing in their loveliness the flowers
Of earth, and yet I knew them, every one.
And so, methought, I came at last to where
Quiet twilight lay upon the land, and closed
Mine eyes to further vision, save I saw
Faintly a Cross, beyond the Cross a tomb
And o'er it the white radiance of Easter lilies
New breaking into bloom.

Raise, raise me up,
Mine eyes grow dim, I cannot see ye now.
Doth Anselm play, or doth another play ?
For this great place is filled with wondrous music.
There's triumph in the chords. They call me
home,
Home to Almighty God, and Christ His Son,
Home to the Saints who build His Church in
heaven,
Home to the glorious company of the redeemed,
Home . . . Ah ! Christ ! . . . My Christ ! . . .

Lines in an Invalid's Album

SUNLIGHT and shadow,
Sunrise and sunset,
Noontide and darkness,
So speeds the world.

Weakness and weariness,
Sickness and sorrow,
Struggle and travail
And death as the end?

No ! Glories that gleam thro'
The grey as the years roll,
Bid us remember
That death is not all.

Around us, about us,
Unseen, yet all-seeing,
The God of our fathers
Remaineth of old.

Still in humanity
He speaks His presence,
In the strength of the true man,
In woman's pure soul.

And so long as the progress
Is upward and onward,
E'en though the way be
Rough-rocked and steep,

While justice and mercy
And love are triumphant,
While God remains God
It is death that must die.

Lines with a Copy of
"In tune with the Infinite"

LIKE attracts like ! Then you should draw
All gracious influences to you,
Who, all unknowing, knew this law,
And held it true.

From out the past the good, the great
Shall lend you aid, who read aright
That one pure soul shall save the State
From utter blight.

In lovely thoughts and deeds you share
Kinship with all the glorious line
Who greatly lived, and those who dare
To-day to be divine.

Dante shall Beatrice bring,
And Shakespeare's heroines throng and press,
And those who sweetly sang, who sing,
Knowing not weariness,

And all the saintly souls who fought,
And fighting passed from death to life,
Who wrought, not knowing what they wrought,
Yet saw beyond the strife,

Are bound to you by holy ties
Of love and service. Tranquil soul !
For you 'tis only Death that dies,
The Part shall see the Whole.

In Southbourne Woods

O THE light and shade
Of the forest glade,
Where the birds sing merrily,
And the sudden hush
When the tawny thrush
Doth tune his pipes with glee.

Deep, deep, deep,
Where the shadows sleep,
And the keen sun cannot see,
Here's a violet
With the cheek still wet
Eve kissed so tenderly.

To the flowers alone
Is the secret known
Of the song that the sweet birds sing,
In the leafy ways
Ye may hear their praise,
Do they praise the joyous spring?

Each new-born leaf
That holds in fief
Of the ever blessed sun
Lifts up its face
With a simple grace
That man has hardly won.

From the dark brown earth
Which hath given it birth
Springeth the pine tree tall,
Each feathery crest
Is hung with a nest
From which the fledgelings call.

The Lengthening Day

BEARER of plenteous promise of glories that
are to be,
Bringer of joys first fruited, and charmed magic
of morn,
Thy silent summons hath sounded beyond the
wastes of the sea,
Already are daffodils born.

Woodlands ring with thy welcome, valleys grow
vocal with praise,
O herald and swift forerunner of an ever-
awakening birth !
Once more in the warm glad sunlight will we
tread the flow'r-crowned ways,
Rejoice with the radiant earth.

O lengthening day, thou bringest the beauty of
summer eve,
Hushed majesty of twilight, and the nightin-
gale's deathless strain,
And the dreams that are more than dreams, that,
not knowing, we weave,
Are God's in their joy and their pain.

Daffodils

THOU art the golden flower of the great God.
We, who have watched thee in the morning
light,
Have felt a Presence o'er thee, heard the deep
Call to the deep, and lo ! from unscaled heights
Of the embosomed heaven there hath sped
A radiance, a swift glory not of earth.
Thou art no more a daffodil, thou art
A still small voice which ever calleth on
To that fair country where is no more death,
But where thou dwellest, an immortal flow'r,
Amid immortal flow'rs and trees and birds.
There thou dost wanton with the gentle wind
That mildly sways the fields of asphodel
To tuneful praise, fearing no chilling blast,
But ever smiling in the face of God.
None but a God hath made thee, and no death
For thee is possible, joy cannot die,
Nor truth nor beauty wither : these are throned
In sovran majesty supreme with Him :
The fabric and foundation of the world.
To thee are wingèd feet, and when thou seem'st
To mortal eyes to die, thou dost but pass
Unstained, untrammelled, thy brief duty done,
Swift to the full fruits of a deathless life.
O happy fields broad sown with happy flowers !
Doth the whole heavenly host, with harp and song,
Rejoice when wearily a human soul
Surmounts the rugged crest of earth's decay ?
So do thy peers rejoice, through the wide heaven
Sweeps the pure intense triumph of their hymn,
The *Jubilate Deo* of the flowers.

The Poet

WHAT is the splendour of song
If it raise no heart from the dust,
If it make no faith more strong,
If it sanctify no trust?
You with your laurelled brow,
And your harp with the garlands hung
That the men of to-day have flung,
Can it ever be other than Now?
How when to-day is gone,
And to-morrow comes, and the fond
Slight men who flung you their praise
Have vanished from earthly ways,
And the men of to-morrow press on
And look—beyond?

Ah, but you say, the rose
Is ever the rose; not less
Is its perfect loveliness
Now than it shall be then.
Aye, true. But how if the men
Of an other desolate day,
Grown sick with a surfeit of woes
Find death in the midst of life,
No joy in the heart of the rose?

If another arise and say,
With the flame of a deathless fire
Lighting the battle-worn face:
My brothers, fight on, for I
Fight with you; press on to the higher
And nobler part, nor tire;

If ye fall it is no disgrace
So ye fall in the heart of the strife,
Fall with your face to your foes,
Knowing ye cannot die !

O brethren of the lyre,
Whom will they choose, these men
Of that other desolate day
Which draweth ever nigher ?

Yea, it were well to praise
And joy in this wondrous earth,
Make glad with the sounds of mirth
The quiet woodland ways ;
Hearing the skylark sing,
To wonder how God hath given
Such melody out of heaven ;
And ah ! when the thrill of spring
Runs through the lengthening days,
And daffodils dance in the sun,
And the primrose sleeps in the glade,
Dreaming the dreams that are made
In the worlds beyond our seeing,
Blessed is he whose being
Is filled with their rapture, made one
With that choric harmony,
By poet and prophet heard
As the cry of the World to the Word,
Of Nature to Deity.

But ye who see no power,
No love made manifest
In the glory and the dower
Of God's great universe,

No promise that the higher
Shall justify the lower,
And the better save the worse,
Do but worship blind desire,
Before whose altar fire
Men do homage to the dead ;
While the sweetly bitter feast
Behold already spread,
And whosoever sup
At that table riseth up
Rose-garlanded indeed—but a beast !

Yea, these your songs are dead,
Sing ye never so sweet :
They shall be as dust 'neath your feet,
And ashes upon your head.
Though the voice of man applaud,
Affronting the patient skies
With frantic thunders and long,
How when the voice of God
Amid awful silence replies,
I never heard your song ?

O, is a poet no more
Than the wandering voice of a song,
The golden voice of a dream ?
Perfection of lyric, of form, .
What are these, if there be no strong
Pure eyes that may pierce the gleam,
And see the invisible shore ?
Speak thou no word of Art,
Work not for Art alone,
Take what thy work shall give,
But beware that thou seek no throne ;

O poet, it is thy part
To look God in the face and live.

Greater thy task than of those
Whom Dante saw in the bliss
That surrounded the Mystic Rose,
Poet, thy task is this.
To be as eyes to the blind,
And a voice unto them that see,
Yet know not how they should speak
Of the wondrous mystery
Which holdeth their souls in awe,
Who can but stammer, I saw
A light, a vision, a gleam,
Gone now but mine evermore.
Thou shalt interpret their dream
By thine own reality,
Shalt make the invisible seen,
And light the world with a word
That shall flash, that shall throb, that shall lift
Men from the What has been
To look on the What shall be,
And take it from God as His gift.
What shall be ! Nay, is. For now
Runs through the plains of earth
A mighty thrill, as of birth
Of infinite beings heard
O poet through thee, and thou,
Binding the world with a song
Not of the world, shalt turn
Thy people from gross delights
And baser pleasures, which burn
In the smoky altar lights
Of misshapen deity,

To other and holier sights,
To noble achievement, to strife
More noble than fatal ease
And acquiescence in wrong.
In thy voice thy people shall hear
Above the discords of pain,
Of weariness, failure, disease,
The eternal music ring clear,
Catch heav'ns majestic refrain :
And if any cry, It is vain,
There is no music in us
Who are bruised and smitten and sore,
Then thou shalt answer them thus,
Make of thy life a song
And song shall come out of thy life,
Song which shall live evermore.

Thou shalt be to thy people eyes,
Yea, eyes which shall look away
From empires of death and decay
Built on ignoble dust,
Cemented with blood and lust,
And frauded in hell : by thee
Thy belovèd shall learn to see
The glory that never dies,
But abides with a people whose trust
Rests not on things of earth.
Thou shalt teach them the little worth
Of that life-in-death, worse than death,
The craving, the lust to possess,
And to make of possession a boast,
A vaunting, a braggart of breath.
Thy word to thy people shall be
Of justice and wisdom, of rule

Of themselves, of submission to law,
And of stewardship held in the awe
Of a trust that shall curse or shall bless
As themselves have learnt in God's school
God's lessons ; to march with the host
Who mould time in eternity.

Thou shalt be to thy people a voice,
A battlesong and a word
Indomitable, a sword
Of steel and gold in God's hand
That shall rest not, nor ever be still,
While ruth oppression or ill
Waste and ravage the land :
Aye, a sword that shall gleam, that shall smite,
In the van of the stricken field,
The foes of justice, of right,
Of truth and mercy, nor yield
Though the spirit be fainting, be dying,
And the bruised body be lying
Forsaken and spurned of men
Who knew not. O poet, then
Thou shalt cry aloud from the sod
To thy Father, Acquit the wrong :
Behold I come with Thy song
On my lips. Though the sheath
Lie stretched on the fields of Death,
Receive back Thy sword, O God.

Œdipus

UNHAPPY Œdipus, thou, maimed and blind,
Incomparably greater than thy fate,
Dost shame Apollo's glory, for thy state
Hath made thee one clear type of humankind,
And thy pure patient sufferings shall bind
Thee to all human hearts that feel the weight
And woe of that they bear, nor did create,
Yet find a blessing in the doom assigned.
But how if Laius, who Apollo's word
Believing, disbelieving, made too true,
Had answered thus, Altho' the God declare
The son shall slay the father, I have heard
Mine heart's voice, which for this young life
doth sue,
I will do right, and let my hope lie there?

The First Rose

O HALF awakèd dream of loveliness,
Shy timorous child of more than mortal
flow'rs,
Joy is thy kingdom, beauty is thy dress,
And thine attendants the fair rainbow hours ;
Firstborn of all thy tender royal line,
Thou dost recall the joy that once was mine.

Once unto me was born a frail first rose,
Guerdon of many pangs ; my joy was deep
And pure ; but ah, the grief a mother knows,
When all too soon her firstborn falls asleep,
God bade me learn in silence. I, bereft,
Saw my rose taken and a thorn was left.

Mine was too fair a flower for earth's dull light ;
I know it now, and so it was withdrawn.
'This message, dear one, carry ; Though 'tis night,
I hope to find my rose when it is dawn.

The First Violet

EVE, the undying sister of the dawn,
Stealing among the quiet woodland glades,
Laying her magic hush upon the earth,
Came to a bank of moss, which humbly bore
Sleeping upon its breast a violet
New-born, the first of all that gracious time :
And Eve was moved, and, bending o'er it, wept,
As it lay sleeping, washed it with her tears,
And spake, Thou happy child of earth and heav'n,
Many the weary years that I have known
Thy kindred glad this woodland with perfume,
And dower each bank with beauty ; they are gone,
Gone, but not dead ; my sister and the Sun
Know not the dwelling of those happy ones,
And I, who fain would follow them, live on
Crown'd with a graceless immortality.

Robin Redbreast

Robin Redbreast, come to me ;
Pretty Robin, prithee teach
Me, who cannot speak, thy speech,
So that of thy minstrelsy

I may learn what gives thy note
So much joy, despite the sting
Of this cruel wintering,
Why it is thy little throat

Bursts with song though winds are cold
Berries few are withered, white
All the trees that gave delight
When the days wore green and gold.

Robin, all my friends are dead,
Though they live they're dead to me,
Such a pow'r hath poverty
To freeze the heart, avert the head.

So I turned away in scorn
To the dark and bitter night,
Dull despair choked out the light,
Ghastlier grew each hopeless morn.

Let it be then—dust to dust !
Thus I spake ; but, friend of mine,
Hearing thy brave note, I must
Still believe God is divine.

A Buttonhole

LITTLE hands that plucked you and put you
there in my coat,
Little face upturned, fairer to me than the flower,
Sweeter than Maytime blossoms to deck a May
Queen's bower,
Laughing eyes, blue as the skydeeps, when
sunbeam and shower
Have loos'd the clouds from their moorings and
set them afloat.

Child heart gracious and kind, that do I love
the best,
Royal little heart, so true to the noblest instincts
that spring
In God's most royal work, as yet thy life doth
but sing
As a blithe and happy bird's : but unhasting years
ever bring
Nearer the question for thee, Whose nest, whose
nest ?

Fairyland

A SHADY lane, that was white with May,
Bordered a glade where the fairies play,
And two little people, hand in hand,
Wandered away into fairyland.

Wee little folk they were, with eyes
Blue and clear as the summer skies,
And in secret council they twain had planned
To steal away into fairyland.

Where the lane turns into the forest glade,
A tiny man, all in red arrayed,
They saw, and he cried, From where I stand
The path leads straight into fairyland.

So the little ones wandered on and on,
Nor noticed the light of the sun was gone,
Until they came to a palace so grand,
They knew 'twas the centre of fairyland.

There were throngs of fairies all dressed in white,
Who danced and sang in the clear moonlight,
For the little people, you understand,
Worship the moon in fairyland.

The birds were sunk in a slumber deep,
The drowsy flowers nodded in sleep,
And, as they nodded, were gently fanned
By the breeze that blows ever thro' fairyland.

Here my tale ends : for never a word
Of what they had seen, or what had heard,
Have I been able to understand,
Who ne'er have visited fairyland.

One thing I know : that those children's eyes
Are often filled with a glad surprise,
As though they saw at the cross-ways stand
Their little red guide to fairyland.

Fairyland ! Fairyland ! Would I might go
To the magic land that our children know,
Dance 'neath the moon with that sprightly band,
And be healed by the breezes of fairyland.

O fathers and mothers, to you I speak,
As you love your little ones, do not seek
To curb their fancy, but take their hand,
And let them lead you to fairyland.

The Falling Leaf

SWIFTLY the hour draws nigh, when, faded
and shrivelled, I fall,
And earth receives what it gave : yet will I not
repine.
I have felt the breath of the glory of God, I
have heard the call
That even the leaf He made hears and knows
as divine.

Out of the darkness I came, when the first pure
beams of spring
Clouded the trees with green, and the bright
and beautiful day
Drew swallows from overseas, and bade the
daffodils bring
Joy to the Mother's face, and laugh the winter
away.

And the golden days sped on ; violets dreamed
at our feet,
Where the lowly couching moss hushed the
bare roots of the tree,
Linnets sang in the brake, and the woodland
glade was sweet,
Sweet with the breath of flowers and that
magic minstrelsy.

What though I now must fall : I fall that others
may live.

I am small in the Maker's plan, yet a part of
the perfect arch.

All moves to a certain goal ; what was given to
me, I give,

Taking my place with those who fall in the
forward march.

The Passing of Summer

SUMMER doth end, and the tall trees bend
Before the autumnal blast ;

Yet ever they seem, methinks, to dream

Of the golden days long past,

Of daffodils dancing, of sunlight glancing,

And shadows softly cast.

The swallows have fled, the flowers are dead,

The nightingale sings no more ;

But the sap runs free in each wind-swept tree,

Earth throbs with life at the core ;

And Winter's mourning makes Summer's adorning

Lovelier than before.

To a Friend

FRIENDS,—but we fain would follow an earth-
born splendour,
Nor crave a higher,
Friends who can nothing but simple friendship
render,
How few desire.

And the voice that raves we applaud, an it
speak no vision
So much the better,
Spirit which worketh in quiet we hold in derision,
Who live by the letter.

But, friend, one day shall be seen your own
soul's beauty
Outshining the sun,
You, to whom Love is Law, and whose life is
Duty
Perfectly done.

*Angel Adoring**

"ANGEL Adoring." So he wrote who saw,
And painted for these afterdays, one face,
One only, but transfigured by the grace
Of perfect holiness and love and awe.
Glory of God in heav'n that hath no flaw
In this His creature, who doth bring no trace
Of earth's corruption to that holy place
Of sure abidance, whereunto we draw.
But there are some who worship at no shrine,
Who know no rapture, and who own no Lord,
Yet do in secret that which is divine,
Live and obey and practise all His word,
Who with clear eyes behold the path He trod,
And following it come unaware on God.

*Ascribed to Fra Lippo Lippi, and in the National Gallery, London.

Madonna

I'M sick to death, I tell you, of it all,
Their pale Madonnas and their puling Christs
Enthroned in glory with adoring saints.
Then paint a better, say you? So I have :
At least, a new conception. Rafael's craft
No man may hope to rival ; but new eyes
See things anew ; and there's a breaking light
Coming betwixt the upper and nether gloom
Of Luther and the Pope, a widening sky,
And God and man blent in one harmony
As ne'er before. What mean I? Come with me,
I'll shew you what I mean, in painting ; how
This new thought strikes me, sweeps out old ideas,
Beats me to earth, then lifts me up again,
And gives me strength to stand before the world
And worship God my own way, Luther's, no,
Nor yet the Pope's. I draw the curtain, thus,—
There's my Madonna—Of the Kitchen! What!
This aged wrinkled crone with horny hands,—
Oh! come, my friend, you carry the joke too far
(Thus do I read your face) : or else blaspheme,
Paltering with holy things. Nay, do not speak,
I know that's what the world will say ; and you,
The Sistine Madonna ever in your eye,—
Yes, yes, it's great I grant you ; as one phase
Of Mary nothing greater do I know.
But—here the question pricks me—Holy Writ
Speaks of the Mother of Christ in after years.
And yet our Rafaels spend consummate art

Upon the girl-mother and the Babe, nor dream
The world's redemption lay i' the womb of time,
The consummate hour not come. That's what
I mean.

What, still you understand not ! Tell me this,
Which were the greater, think you, Christ the
Babe,

Or Christ the Man, dying in agony
Upon the Cross, blessing His enemies ?
Fruition's greater than the bud, you say ?
Yea, that's a truth once learned, once clearly
grasped,

Should make you wiser, give you eyes to see
Beyond the first four chapters of the text.
Christ was not God before He learned to speak,—
(O, my good friend, the walls are thick, and monks
Come not so often since I kicked the last
From off my hearth for cozening my child
Against her father's wishes ; so I speak
Without much fear of burning, yet awhile).
The doctrine of original sin ? Ah, yes !

But we're grown men, not children, you and I ;
And if we all are tainted so was He ;—
Nay, nay, I speak in very reverence,
Believing He was God, but what I mean
Is this, if He has meaning for my life,
That all the hidden promptings which, indulged,
Drag us to hell and make us brutish beasts,
He knew and conquered, rooted out the tares,
So that the harvest whitens all the world.

You don't believe that ? Test your own creed,
then,

The Churches' creed, and German Luther's, too.
He was Incarnate God from first to last,

So you affirm ; but what a monstrous growth
Of doubt and unbelief springs out of that.
He was not God because He vanquished sin,
He was not God because He died for men,
Because His so great love hath overflowed
Hell's limits, and death's frontiers blotted out ;
But He was God because a sinless birth
By special miracle set Him apart
From all our human race, nor had He choice
To will it otherwise. What mockery
To bid us be like Him ! I'll venture this
Against the Sacred College, Luther, all,
Though I burn for't,—He is greater far
Who conquers lust than he who knows it not.
He knew and hated sin, so Holy Writ
Avouches ; aye, 'twas no extraneous thing
He hated, but the hidden lurking snare
Which, planted in us all, one day we choose,
And, choosing, sin ; He chose the upward path
From the first knowledge, God grew into Him
As the clear dawn grows into gaping night
Till all is day. This I must fain believe,
Else were He less than God, if more than man.
Well, let the question pass. I had not meant
To argue ; serve you God in your own way
As I in mine ; but what I press is this :
The Risen Lord were greater than the Babe ;
Fruition's greater than the bud, you said.
Then why stop short with Him ? Oh, I contend
That she, the Mother of Our Saviour Christ,
Time's marks upon her brow, her whitened hair,
The world's great sorrow planted in her heart,
The world's great hope irradiate in her soul,
Was a far greater Mary than the maid,

Joseph's sweet wife, who bore the infant Lord.
And so I strove to paint this Mary, sought
Take up the task where Rafael laid it down,
With what success stands on the easel there.
You like it not? It lacks the nimbus, lacks
The visible divinity, you say.
To eyes that see it lacketh naught of these,
But addeth glory to them. Listen, friend.
Five years ago it came into my mind,
This my conception, not one sudden blaze
Of ample vision; but my inmost being
Was stirred as tho' the breath of the living God
Moved on the face of the waters; all my art,
That dull complacent petty art which stoops
To earthly pomps, and misses Christ's dear face,
Was torn away, and through the veil I caught
Far glimpses of the wider deeper truth,
So that my soul was shaken; I went forth
Seeking a living embodiment, until
After three years of wand'ring I returned
To Padua, dissatisfied, content
With nothing seen; and in my studio there
My mother met me, and my blind eyes saw
All that I sought; a fool, not to have known
That God is ever in our homes! You start.
She died at Brescia, just a year ago.
And now you see why I have painted her
Madonna, why none other would suffice.
Because, my friend, I knew her as she was,
The mother who had loved me. To you she seems
A plain old woman, verging near the grave.
Nay, seek not to deny it. But to me,
Clear marks of God's divinity are traced
Upon her brow, made pure with holy thought;

And these her hands—O, were not Mary's hands
Made hard with labour for her dearly loved?
Ah me! She worked and strove that I might eat,
And study painting, and lie soft at nights,
Giving herself unselfishly for me,
Her dearly loved. Aye, friend, could you but see,
As I can see, the gems of precious service
These toil-worn fingers bear, you had bowed down
In awe; and this her body broken
In strife with hunger silently endured,
Became a temple of the Holy Ghost,
Shafts of the living glory piercing through
Earth's encrustations. Oh, I can't go on.
Tears blind mine eyes. But now, you see, you
see—
God doeth miracles in these late days.

THE END

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